

REMARKS

The Examiner is thanked for the careful examination of the application. However, in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections.

Claims 3, 8, 11 and 17 are cancelled. Accordingly, the claim objections are moot.

In objecting to the drawings, the Examiner states that the transition between differing qualities in Fig. 22 needs to be clearly expressed, and suggests enlarging the images. However, in the Applicants view, this transition is already quite clearly expressed. Nevertheless, the present amendment includes a replacement sheet depicting Fig.22 with enlarged images. If the Examiner intends to maintain the drawing objection, it is kindly urged that the undersigned counsel for Applicants be telephoned so that the drawing objection can be expeditiously resolved.

Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Bannai.

Claim 1 recites an image processing apparatus which acquires coded data of a plurality of images from an external recording medium recording hierarchically encoded data of the plurality of images in the unit of hierarchically encoding, the apparatus including an input interface which receives signals from an external recording medium, an image input controller which acquires the coded data by the input interface first only at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images, a decoder which decodes the coded data acquired by the image input controller, and a storage device which stores data decoded by the decoder.

Bannai discloses an image communication apparatus including a communication control unit 5 which receives image data for further processing by a decoding device 9. As explained in lines 57-60 of column 5, the image data of an image includes a header portion and an encoded image portion subjected to progressive coding. As further explained in the paragraph starting on lines 12-42 of column 7, the encoded image portion includes first-stage (lower resolution) encoded data, second-stage encoded data, etc.

The Examiner appears to take the position regarding Bannai that the communication control unit 5 constitutes an image input controller which inherently includes an input interface, the frame memory 10 constitutes a storage device which stores data decoded by the decoding device 9, and the first-stage (lower resolution) encoded data comprises coded data at a low level of a unit of hierarchical encoding.

However, assuming for the sake of discussion that the Examiner's interpretations are plausible, Claim 1 is still not anticipated by Bannai. In particular, there is no disclosure in Bannai that the communication control unit 5 acquires coded data first only at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding over a plurality of images. Instead, it appears that, for a plurality of images, the communication control unit 5 would, at most, sequentially acquire each individual image's image data as a whole, one image at a time. That is, every stage of the first image's encoded data would be acquired first, then every stage of the second image's encoded data, and so on.

Accordingly, Claim 1 is allowable over Bannai, and withdrawal of the rejection of Claim 1 as being anticipated by Bannai is respectfully requested.

Claim 9 is also rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Bannai.

Claim 9 recites an image processing method for acquiring coded data of a plurality of images from an external recording medium which records hierarchically encoded data of the plurality of images in the unit of hierarchically encoding, the method comprising the steps of acquiring the coded data first only at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images, and decoding the coded data acquired from the external recording medium.

Consistent with the above discussion, Bannai does not disclose acquiring coded data first only at a low level of a unit of hierarchical encoding from an external recording medium over a plurality of images. Accordingly, Claim 9 is allowable over Bannai, and withdrawal of the rejection of Claim 9 as being anticipated by Bannai is respectfully requested.

Claim 15, the remaining independent claim, is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bannai in view of Kajiwara.

Claim 15 recites a computer readable recording medium which records an image processing program for acquiring coded data of a plurality of images from an external recording medium which records hierarchically encoded data of the plurality of images in the unit of hierarchically encoding, the program comprising the steps of acquiring the coded data first only at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images, and decoding the coded data acquired from the external recording medium.

Consistent with the above discussion, Bannai does not disclose acquiring coded data first only at a low level of a unit of hierarchical encoding from an external recording medium over a plurality of images. Furthermore, Kajiwara does not cure the above-noted deficiencies of Bannai. Accordingly, Claim 15 is allowable over Bannai in view of Kajiwara, and withdrawal of the rejection of Claim 15 as being unpatentable over Bannai in view of Kajiwara is respectfully requested.

The dependent claims are allowable at least by virtue of their dependence from allowable independent claims. Thus, a detailed discussion of the additional distinguishing features recited in the dependent claims is not set forth at this time.

Early and favorable action with respect to this application is respectfully requested.

In the event that there are any questions concerning this response, or the application in general, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned in order to expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

BUCHANAN INGERSOLL & ROONEY PC

Date: June 18, 2008

By: Peter T. deVore
Peter T. deVore
Registration No. 60361

P.O. Box 1404
Alexandria, VA 22313-1404
703 836 6620